

Now we are entering a new era in our national existence. We are approaching a time unlike any in our past, in which ideas and information will move around the world at unprecedented speed, and in which there will be more opportunity for people to live out their dreams than ever before. I strongly urge today's young Americans to step forward and accept the challenge of helping to shape our Nation as we move into the 21st century. Register to vote, study the issues and the candidates, and think seriously about what kind of country you want America to be. And then, like the millions of Americans who have gone before you, exercise what may be your most important right—the right to vote.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 2, 1996, as National Student Voter Education Day, I call upon Federal, State, and local officials, as well as leaders of civic, educational, and religious organizations to conduct meaningful ceremonies and programs in their schools, churches, and other community gathering places to foster a better understanding of the 26th amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the rights and duties of citizenship.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on October 4.

Remarks on Signing the Comprehensive Methamphetamine Control Act of 1996

October 3, 1996

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Attorney General Reno; Secretary Rubin; Secretary Shalala; General McCaffrey; OMB Director Frank Raines; Under Secretary Kelly; our ATF Director, John McGaw; Bonnie Campbell; Bob Scully and the board members of NAPO; to the families who are here represented that were mentioned by the Attorney General who have paid such a great price to serve our country in law enforcement. To the Members of Congress who are here who supported this action in a completely bipartisan way, I thank you for being here: Senator Biden, Senator Graham, Senator Feinstein, Senator John Kerry, Senator Reid, Senator Specter, Senator Wellstone, Congressman Conyers, Congressman Fazio, Congressman Fox, Congressman Frost, Congressman Luther, Congressman Studds. I thank you all for your active support of these initiatives and for your presence here today.

I would like to begin by saluting the brave men and women who are in law enforcement in the United States. Before this ceremony, I had the honor of meeting and presenting the annual Top Cop award to 25 law enforcement officials from around the country who have displayed heroism, devotion to duty, and service to their communities that is truly extraordinary. That service is also on display in every community every day. Our police are at the center of our strategy as a nation for fighting crime, and today I think every American should give them thanks. So I would like to ask all of you to recognize those who have been awarded the Top Cop award behind us. [*Applause*]

I would also like to say again a special word of thanks to Richard Hagerman and Donna Whitson, to the O'Hare and Alou families, and to Karen Degan and her family for their remarkable work to prove that representative

government can still represent, can still actually respond to the legitimate needs and concerns of the citizens of this country.

This is a good day for America because we have seen a change in the attitudes of our people, the actions of communities, and the work in Washington on the problem of crime. Today, after years and years of talking about the crime problem, we can actually see that we can say with a clear heart and a clear mind and absolute conviction to the American people, "There is something you can do about crime." We are getting results, and today we mark the passage of three more laws that further advance our anticrime strategy.

Four years ago, we put in place an anticrime strategy that was both tough and smart. It was eventually embodied in the 1994 crime bill. It has been behind all of our actions over the last 3½ years. We are on track to putting 100,000 new community police officers on the street, people who work with their neighbors to catch criminals, close crack houses, who work with citizens groups, which we have also supported, to prevent crime before it happens.

I am pleased that the budget bill I signed on Monday evening will keep moving forward on our promise to finish putting 100,000 police on the street. We have toughened penalties, made "three strikes and you're out" the law of the land, expanded the death penalty, said to drug dealers who prey on public housing, "One criminal conviction and you are out of public housing." We have said to sexual predators, "The law will follow you wherever you go," and we are working to establish a national registry for sexual predators to make absolutely sure that that is exactly what happens. We are taking guns off the street, banning 19 deadly assault weapons, passing the Brady bill.

And we are giving our young people some things to say yes to as well: expanded anti-drug programs in our schools, encouragement to communities to enforce truancy laws, impose community curfews, introduce policies like school uniforms. All of these things will work to give our children a stronger sense of right and wrong and a greater capacity to do what is right.

This strategy, of course, is not ours alone. In fact, I would say to all those here—especially to you, Senator Biden, who helped us write the crime bill of 1994—what we have done in Washington is a reflection of what we have heard from the energy, the determination, and the activities of thousands and thousands of citizens and law enforcement officials all across this country where our police are taking back their streets, enlisting the active support of community watch groups, of parents, of businesses.

For 4 years in a row now, crime has come down in America. Murders are down; rapes are down; robberies are down; drug use is down. The rising tide of juvenile violence, which seemed poised to upend our progress, has finally begun to recede. There are one million fewer crime victims today than there were a year ago. Now we must press on. We must build on this strategy of putting more police on the street and taking criminals, drugs, and guns off the street. That is what these measures we mark today do.

First, earlier this week, Congress answered my call to expand on the proven success of the Brady bill. When our police officers and crime victims were advocating the passage of the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban, those who opposed them told the Nation's hunters that Congress would take their guns away. Well, now we know. After 2 years, not a single hunter has been denied a weapon but 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers have been denied guns because of the Brady bill. It was plainly the right thing to do. It has worked.

Until now, the Brady bill has worked to bar felons from buying guns, handguns. Thousands of people, however, who are wifebeaters or child abusers, even those who have wielded weapons in their assaults, could still buy handguns with potentially deadly consequences. There is no more harmful type of violence than this.

In August, I asked Congress to pass an extension of the Brady bill to deny handguns to anyone convicted of domestic violence. I am pleased that the Congress enacted this important domestic violence law as part of the budget bill. It is a very fitting way to begin Domestic Violence Awareness Month, which I am proclaiming today. Now, with a

strong voice, America says: If you are convicted of a felony you should not have a gun. If you are a fugitive from the law, you should not have a gun. If you are stalking or harassing women or children, you should not have a gun. And if you raise and commit an act of violence against your spouse or your child, you should not have a gun. That is now the law of the land.

Second, I am very pleased that in the budget bill Congress passed, more was done to help break the cycle of crime and drugs. Drug dealers with guns and criminals on drugs are central to our crime problem. Up to two-thirds of the adults arrested for felonies today have substance abuse problems. When criminals go on parole and then they go back on drugs, chances are very high that they will commit new crimes. Now, listen to this—I couldn't believe it when I learned this—60 percent, 60 percent, of the heroin and cocaine sold in our country is purchased by people on bail, on probation, or on parole. Seventy-five percent of the prisoners with a history of heroin or cocaine use are released without treatment, to go back on drugs within 3 months and back to the cycle of crime and drugs.

Today, States often do not do much to drug test prisoners or parolees or take action to break them of their habit. Last month, I proposed legislation to do something about that. It requires States receiving Federal prison funds to develop comprehensive drug testing and treatment programs for prisoners and parolees. And I am very, very pleased that the Congress passed this legislation. We say to inmates, "If you stay on drugs, you have to stay in jail." We say to parolees, "If you go back on drugs, then you have to go back to jail. If you want to stay on the street, stay off drugs."

I have asked the Attorney General to issue preliminary guidelines for the States to help them comply with this new law by the end of this year. I am pleased we are not wasting any time.

And again let me thank the Congress for their prompt action on this problem. This has the potential to make a huge difference in the crime problem in America, as well as to liberate a lot of people from a drug abuse habit and enable them to go back to being

responsible citizens instead of just being in a revolving door, in and out of prison all their lives.

Finally, I'm pleased that Congress has passed important antidrug legislation that I submitted last spring to deal with methamphetamine. Methamphetamine is a deadly drug that unfortunately is gaining popularity. In 2 years, deaths from this drug have doubled. Currently isolated in geographic pockets, its use now threatens to spread nationwide.

With this legislation we increase penalties for trafficking in meth, toughen the penalties for trafficking in those chemicals used to produce meth, and give the Justice Department authority to regulate and seize those chemicals. I am particularly pleased that we are acting before this epidemic spreads. And I thank General McCaffrey and Attorney General Reno for their urgency in this matter. We have to stop meth before it becomes the crack of the 1990's, and this legislation gives us a chance to do it.

Again, let me say to General McCaffrey a thank-you for your work and for holding two national forums on methamphetamine, one with Senator Feinstein in southern California and one with Senator Kerry in Nebraska, over the next few months.

All of these new laws will help us fight crime, but we must recognize that more police and tougher penalties cannot fight crime alone. Parents have to teach their children to stay away from drugs and out of gangs and violence. Clergy, businesspeople, educators, all must do their part. We need more citizens out there patrolling the streets, and we are trying to generate another million volunteers to help because we know that these citizen patrols have dramatically reduced crime when they are working with police officers. And all of our young people must decide to assume more personal responsibility to stay off drugs, out of gangs, and away from jail and within the law.

As of today, if you commit an act of violence against your spouse or child, you can't purchase a gun. If you violate your parole and use drugs, you must go back to jail. If you traffic in meth, you must pay a stiff penalty. We are safer because of these actions.

Again, I thank the Congress. And I'm pleased to sign the legislation, and I'd like to ask the Members who are here and the law enforcement officers to come up and be with me.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:23 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Robert T. Scully, executive director, National Association of Police Organizations. S. 1965, approved October 3, was assigned Public Law No. 104-237.

Remarks in Buffalo, New York

October 3, 1996

The President. Thank you. Wow! Thank you. Thank you. Hello, Buffalo. Hello, Erie County. You know, Congressman LaFalce, I am on my way to Chautauqua to prepare for the debate. And I was listening to you go through these steps, and it occurred to me that I ought to take you with me. I need to remember—I hope I can remember all those things you just said Sunday night in the debate.

I am glad to be back here in Buffalo. I thank you all for being here. I want to say thank you, Mayor Masiello. Thank you, Erie County Executive Dennis Gorski. I want to thank the leaders of the State Democratic Party, the Deputy Speaker Arthur Eve and Mrs. Eve. Now they have two sons working for me. Thank you very much. We have Mayor Galie from Niagara Falls here. And we have two other candidates for Congress here. I'd like to ask them to come forward and wave: Tom Fricano, the congressional candidate from the 2d District, and Fran Pordum from the 30th District. There you are. Thank you, gentlemen.

And I want to thank the high school band for playing for us. Let's give them a big hand. [Applause] The colder it gets the harder it is to play one of those instruments, I know. But in Buffalo, this is a heat wave, right? [Laughter]

Let me tell you, I am delighted to be back here in your county, in your city. I'm glad to be back in western New York. You know, 4 years ago when I came here and asked you to help me rebuild the American dream, our country was drifting toward the 21st century.

We had high unemployment, stagnant wages, the slowest job growth since the Great Depression, rising crime, increasing inequality among working families, and increasing tensions in our society. We were drifting toward the 21st century. And 4 years later, we're on the right track, roaring toward the 21st century. And I thank you for your support of our efforts.

We have worked hard to create a country in which the American dream is alive and well for all of our people, a country that is coming together instead of being driven apart by our diversity, a country that is leading the world to peace and freedom and prosperity. And compared to 4 years ago, there's a lot of good news: 10½ million more jobs; average family income is up \$1,600 after inflation since we passed the economic plan that our opponents said would drive the country into the ditch. They were wrong, and we were right.

We have record numbers of new businesses. Ten million people got an increase in their minimum wage the day before yesterday, on October 1st, when the minimum wage increase went into effect. And we learned last week that economic benefits are finally going to all of our working people. We had the biggest decline in inequality among wage earners in growing incomes in 27 years; the biggest drop in the number of people in poverty in 27 years; the lowest poverty rate among senior citizens ever recorded; the biggest drop in childhood poverty in 20 years. This country is on the right track for the 21st century.

When I became President our deficit was \$290 billion and headed higher. We'd quadrupled the debt in 4 years. It is now going down 4 years in a row, the first time that's happened in any Presidential administration since the 1840's, before the Civil War. We are moving in the right direction.

Our deficit would not exist today, we would have a surplus today—a surplus today—we would have even lower interest rates, we could cut taxes more, we could grow the economy faster if we had a surplus today, which we would have if it weren't for the debt run up in the 12 years before I became President, with the same economic program that our opponents are advocating